



# Employees who **smoke**— Helping them **quit**

It is common knowledge that smoking is bad for your health. In fact, smoking costs the Ontario economy about \$2 billion in health care costs each year. Workers who smoke are also at higher risk of contracting diseases from exposure to various substances in the workplace. Of course there's also the risk of a fire. And because of the health effects, smoking has also been blamed for lost productivity that costs Ontario's economy about \$6 billion a year. That means there is a very real cost to your company if you have smokers on the payroll.

In Ontario, smoking at work is governed by the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*. This Act bans smoking in enclosed workplaces, including the inside of a building or structure, construction-site trailer offices, loading docks, and delivery trucks or other work vehicles. An individual who does not comply with the Act could face a fine of up to \$5,000; for corporations there is no maximum fine.

Quitting is not easy, especially for workers who are

frequently reminded of the habit by working with others who smoke. As an employer you can play an important role in helping the workers who want to quit smoking. Here are just some of the ways:

- Find out if your workplace employee-assistance program offers counselling for smokers wanting to quit. If it does, let your employees know about it.
- Hold a "quit smoking" contest.
- Host a health fair or "lunch and learn" where workers can learn about support services.
- Figure out how to subsidize or share the cost of aids to quitting smoking.
- Adopt a smoke-free policy at work, and tell the workers about the resources that are available to help them stop smoking.

Workers who want to stop smoking may also find help and resources from the Smokers' Helpline and the Ministry of Health.



*A wide range of quitting resources are available through the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport on its website: [www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/quitting-resources-consumer.asp](http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/quitting-resources-consumer.asp)*